

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

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C O N F I D E N T I A L ADDIS ABABA 10448

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR SO ET KE FT

SUBJECT: ETHIOPIAN RENEWAL OF OFFER FOR CONFEDERATION
WITH NEIGHBORING STATES

1. IN AN EARLY AUGUST INTERVIEW WITH REUTERS (BUT ONLY SEEN HERE IN AUGUST 22 PARIS TRIBUNE), FONMIN KIFLE RENEWED A SUGGESTION MADE NEARLY ELEVEN MONTHS AGO FOR DISCUSSION OF SOME KIND OF CONFEDERATION ARRANGEMENT WITH SUDAN, SOMALIA, KENYA AND TFAI.

2. KIFLE'S STATEMENT APPARENTLY UPSET THE SOMALIS. THE SOMALI AMBASSADOR HERE, ABDURAMAN ALI, TELLS US HE TOOK EPMG TO TASK OVER THE STORY, PARTICULARLY RESENTING KIFLE'S PUBLISHED COMPLAINT THAT SOMALIA HAS NEVER REPLIED TO EPMG OVERTURES. FACT IS, ALI TELLS US, NONE OF THE OTHER COUNTRIES HAS BEEN ABLE TO REPLY BECAUSE OF VAGUENESS AND LACK OF PRECISION IN THE ORIGINAL OFFER. COUNTRIES CONCERNED, HE ADDS, ALSO STRONGLY SUSPECT PROPOSAL WAS ONLY PROPAGANDA GAMBIT. (TFAI CANNOT, OF COURSE, REACT UNTIL IT GAINS INDEPENDENCE.) THE SOMALIS HAVE PROBED MOFA UNSUCCESSFULLY FOR A CLARIFICATION OF THE PROPOSAL (ALI DID NOT SEE KIFLE). ALI POINTEDLY ASKED MOFA OFFICIALS WHETHER LACK OF ANY PUBLICITY IN ETHIOPIA MEANT THAT EPMG WANTED TO CONCEAL THE CONFEDERATION OFFER

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FROM THE ETHIOPIAN PEOPLE.

3. COMMENT: WE HAVE HEARD NOTHING ABOUT THE ORIGIN OR MOTIVATION OF THIS SPECIFIC STATEMENT BY FONMIN. SOMALIS SEEM STILL TO BE SMARTING FROM BEING OUT-PLAYED BY EPMG AT THE OAU SUMMIT AND, THEREFORE, KIFLE'S ACCUSATION OF SOMALI UNRESPONSIVENESS (UNWARRANTED IN EMBASSY'S OPINION) IS DOUBLY GALLING. EMBASSY LEANS TOWARD VIEW THAT CONFEDERATION PROPOSAL WAS NOT MADE IN EARNEST BUT TO KEEP SOMALIS OFF BALANCE. MIDDLE-LEVEL MOFA OFFICIALS HAVE TOLD US THAT MOFA IS BEING GIVEN FREER HAND, ESPECIALLY IN SOMALI POLICY. THIS GREATER FREEDOM, THEY SAY, ALLOWS ETHIOPIA TO BE MORE "INNOVATIVE". SUCH "INNOVATION" TAKES THE FORM OF ACTIVELY PRESSING FELLOW AFRICANS TO ENDORSE SPECIFICALLY OAU CHARTER PROVISIONS RE TERRITORIAL INTEJGRITY AND DOMESTIC NON-INTERFERENCE (WHICH FAVOR ETHIOPIA, NOT SOMALI) AND PROPOSING IRREPROACHABLE (AMONG AFRICANS) "PEACEFUL SOLUTIONS" TO KNOTTY PROBLEMS, E.G., THE NORTHEAST AFRICAN CONFEDERATION AND RENUCIATION OF CLAIMS BY THE TFAI'S NEIGHBORS. IT IS UNLIKELY THAT ETHIOPIA EXPECTS THESE PROPOSALS TO BEAR FRUIT, BUT THEY HELP KEEP SOMALIA ON THE DEFENSIVE.

HUMMEL

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